

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2007
REGULAR SESSION
AUDITORIUM
TOWN HALL
6:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 6:00 PM in the Auditorium at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were no questions.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Eagle Scout Recognition: William Krishna Richard

Chairman Solomon read a proclamation from the Board of Selectmen honoring William Richard. Selectman Brownsberger read a citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives congratulating Mr. Richard on achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

Selectman Firenze read a proclamation from the Board honoring Lawrence McCormick for his years of service as a Library Trustee.

CPA Discussions/Appointment

The Board agreed to defer any appointments to the Committee until the new Board sits in April.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported that he has received reports from Town committees on the incidence of members missing meetings.

The Sherman Street land auction is taking place next Tuesday.

The Senior Center Committee is reviewing BSC Group's parking study report. Chairman Solomon expressed frustration about the continuing delays on the project and the Board discussed whether there might be a way for the Board to push the process along.

Mr. Younger said that Dante's Restaurant will be applying for a liquor license. They are hoping to open in the fall. Six months into the Central Fire Station project completion window, Burke & Co. has not yet filed for a special permit, but is marketing the office space on the upper levels of the fire station. The Board expressed its desire to get an update on the progress of this matter.

The School Committee will be meeting with the Security Committee in the near future.

A purchase and sale agreement for the Harvard Lawn Fire Station is being finalized and a neighborhood meeting with the developer, Urbanica, will be held this month.

The Board discussed concerns raised by business owners trying to understand the rules about business signage. Mr. Younger and Community Development Director Glenn Clancy will work on suggestions for correcting some problems that have arisen with the signage by-law.

IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

A. The Brendan Grant Foundation seeks permission for 6th Annual Brendan's Home Run charitable 5k run and walk planned for Father's Day, June 17, 2007.

The Board moved: To approve the request.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

V. ACTION BY WRITING

A. Approval of Warrant for 2007 Annual Town Election held on April 2, 2007

The Board moved: To approve the Warrant as printed.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

B. Appointment to the Information Technology Advisory Committee

The Board moved: To appoint Dan Ellard to the Information Technology Advisory Committee.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

C. Appointment to the Municipal Light Advisory Board (MLAB)

The MLAB would like to add former Light Department Director Tim McCarthy as a member of the Advisory Board.

The Board moved: To expand the membership of the MLAB to 6 and to appoint Tim McCarthy to the MLAB.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

VI. OTHER

Selectman Brownsberger shared a complaint from a resident about inconsistent parking enforcement and curb cuts - longstanding issues which have motivated the resident to move out of Belmont. Mr. Conti said he intends to have a conversation with the police chief about inconsistency of parking enforcement and what might be needed to try to improve service in this area.

The Board will discuss parking issues on Alexander Avenue and Goden Street as well as commercial loading issues on Alexander Avenue next week.

The Board discussed a memo from DPW Director Peter Castanino with survey results of what surrounding Towns do about requiring snow removal on sidewalks in front of private property. Many cities have such a requirement but very few towns do.

Capital Project Planning Group

The Board was joined by the Warrant Committee, Capital Budget Committee, and Permanent Building Committee, constituting the Capital Project Planning Group (formerly the Mega Group.) Chairman Solomon reviewed that the group's mandate is to look at all the major capital and building projects proposed for the next several years.

Report from the Pavement Management Committee

Chairman Mike Speidel and members of the Pavement Management Committee appeared before the Group. Mr. Speidel made a presentation on the Committee's interim report.

Phil Curtis asked what the impact on the plan would be if only \$1.25 million is allocated for roads from free cash. Mr. Speidel said that would represent about 6 months worth of work lost and would delay the completion of the project by that much time. He said there may also be political consequences as far as voters' willingness to approve an override.

Mark Clark asked about a provision that would prohibit private owners from adding curbing after a road is rebuilt if it is not called for by the plan. Mr. Speidel said this is not a critical part of the plan, but the idea was to ensure uniformity and equal treatment. This led to a discussion of the merits of curbing in different situations.

Selectman Brownsberger suggested that if additional funding is secured it might be better to focus on accelerating work on the main roads rather than try to work on local roads, saying many residents are satisfied with the condition of the local roads. There was discussion.

Status report on projects in progress (Permanent Building Committee)

Pat Bruschi, Chair of the Permanent Building Committee, reviewed the list of anticipated future building projects, not including those that are already underway. The list includes the ice rink, Underwood Pool, Field House, Police Station, DPW yard, Library, High School, and Wellington School.

Ms. Bruschi shared new cost estimates for the High School renovation. The latest estimate for the full project cost is \$70.2 million for construction in 2008. If only the first phase of the project is done including the science wing and the HVAC replacement, that cost would be \$22.3 million assuming construction in 2009.

For the Wellington School, Ms. Bruschi noted that if lower enrollment projections are used, the anticipated cost of the project could decrease by about \$2 million or roughly 3.5%.

A resident asked about the anticipated cost of the Senior Center. Ms. Bruschi said the voters approved \$6.4 million for the project.

Bob McLaughlin asked what the expected reimbursement would be from the State for school building projects. Ms. Bruschi said for Belmont it would be 40%.

Process for evaluating future capital projects (Selectmen)

There was discussion of a proposal from the Selectmen to appoint a smaller Capital Project Overview Committee to look at all projects to determine the most efficient use of the Town's land and buildings including the possibility of combining projects. The scope would include all projects except the Senior Center project which is already underway. The committee would report back to the larger group by October.

Ms. Fallon said she supports this idea from a Planning Board perspective and it fits into the goal of comprehensive planning in general.

Mark Clark suggested that the Committee might be constituted as a committee of Town Meeting and not of the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Firenze said that the committee should take into account in its studies the lifetime costs of maintaining a building, which in the past was not always considered when the decision to fund a building project was made.

General Discussion

Ms. Fallon suggested that given the parking demands in town, integrated underground parking should be considered when studying any proposed new buildings. Even though this increases costs, the Town simply does not have the land area to find surface parking for all needs.

A resident asked how safety concerns in the buildings would be addressed. Selectman Firenze said safety concerns and handicapped accessibility have a lot to do with how projects are prioritized. Selectman Brownsberger clarified that it is not expected that the proposed committee's review need delay the schedule of any projects. Pat Bruschi pointed out that the state is going to be asking for the school projects whether alternative siting options have been studied, so this could actually help those projects if the Committee reports on time.

Hal Shubin, Chair of Library Trustees said that the Town needs to take advantage of the opportunity to move forward with the library project based on the anticipated availability of state funding sooner than expected. The Trustees want to request that Town Meeting be asked to create a building committee for the project so that it can move forward. He said that previous studies have not turned up any promising alternative proposals for the Library and the Trustees would be concerned about anything that might delay the project.

Chairman Solomon noted that the Selectmen considered and rejected this request and subsequently have received a substantial number of e-mails in support of the request. He noted that every project, including the Library, has to be considered in the context of the Town's overall situation. The Board cannot go to Town meeting and ask for money for roads, schools, library etc. all at the same time. Also, an operating budget gap is projected for FY08 of \$2-3 million that will have to be closed and it is anticipated that there will be a need for an operating override for FY09.

A resident asked if there is any debt retirement anticipated that might create an opportunity for funding. Town Treasurer Floyd Carman said the next major debt retirement will be the Chenery in 2015, but only minor items until then.

Jill Westcott pointed out that the cost of the library project will only escalate over time. The Trustees are not requesting to jump ahead of the Wellington but rather to be added to the queue to move forward at the same time as other projects. She reminded the group that appointing a building committee does not imply a debt exclusion override.

Ms. Fallon said appointing a building committee suggests that we are supporting the design produced by the feasibility study and she is not convinced that the Town has come to agreement on that.

Ms. Westcott said the library trustees have done their best to work with other interests and explore options for combining or relocating. She said if the library site is agreed on, the design can certainly be modified, but the trustees feel it is highly unlikely the library can be feasibly relocated.

Ann Mahon asked if an override can be structured to give the voters an option to approve extra funding for a project such as the library. It was confirmed that this is possible. Jim Heigham said this would be a disaster and would be a recipe for failure of the override.

There was discussion of the lack of sprinkler systems at the Wellington and other properties and the extent to which this constitutes a safety hazard.

The Board adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator